

Appl. No. 10/826,331
Amdt. Dated 3-08-06
Reply to Office Action of 12-08-05

Amendments to the Claims

The current listing of claims replaces all previous versions of the claims.

Listing of Claims

1. (currently amended) A gate latching mechanism comprising:
 - a frame comprising a plurality of spaced vertical members pivotally secured to a first fence post and removably engageable with a second fence post respectively, said frame extending between the first and second fence posts for preventing entrance from an exterior thereof;
 - a handle pivotally ~~connected~~ mounted with respect to one said plurality of the vertical members and being movable along a first plane between neutral and pivoted positions, said handle comprising a bolt traversing therethrough and being disposed substantially orthogonal to the first plane;
 - an elongated locking member operably connected to said handle bolt and being disposed along a horizontal plane between the plurality of fence posts and extending substantially perpendicular to said handle bolt, said locking member contemporaneously moving with said handle bolt in select directions during operating conditions;
 - a plurality of brackets connected to one of the fence posts and said frame respectively, said plurality of brackets for guiding and receiving said locking member therethrough so that said frame can be selectively toggled between locked and unlocked positions;
 - a back up plate welded to said plurality of brackets and for assisting to maintain said locking member at a substantially stable position during operating conditions; and
 - spring means disposed within said locking member and for maintaining said locking member at a predetermined position so that said frame can remain locked as desired by a user, said spring means comprising
 - a pin connected to said back up plate and extending outwardly therefrom
 - towards said locking member, said locking member having a substantially
 - horizontal slot formed therein and for receiving said pin therethrough so that said

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locking member can be directed along a substantially horizontal path when moved between open and closed positions, and
a helical spring member connected to said pin and extending rearwardly therefrom within said locking member, said spring member being stretched when said locking member is moved to an open position and reaching an equilibrium state when said locking member is moved to a closed position.

2. (canceled)

3. (original) The gate latching mechanism of claim 1, further comprising:
a rod coupling welded to said locking member and having a threaded interior surface for receiving said handle bolt therein; and
a stop member threadably connected to said rod coupling and for defining a maximum distance through which said handle bolt can be inserted into said rod coupling.

4. (original) The gate latching mechanism of claim 1, further comprising: an off-center bracket for pivotally connecting said handle to said frame, said off-center bracket comprising
a flange portion secured to said frame, and
a plurality of spaced side walls integral with said flange portion and for receiving said handle therebetween, said plurality of side walls having a plurality of apertures formed therein and being respectively aligned along a select plane and for receiving a fastening member therethrough so that said handle can be selectively pivoted as desired by a user.

5. (original) The gate latching mechanism of claim 3, further comprising: at least one bushing positioned about said rod coupling and for assisting to maintain same at a stable position during operating conditions.

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6. (currently amended) A gate latching mechanism comprising:

a frame comprising a plurality of spaced vertical members pivotally secured to a first fence post and removably engageable with a second fence post respectively, said frame extending between the first and second fence posts for preventing entrance from an exterior thereof;

a handle pivotally ~~connected~~ mounted with respect to one said ~~plurality of the~~ vertical members and being movable along a first plane between neutral and pivoted positions, said handle comprising a bolt traversing therethrough and being disposed substantially orthogonal to the first plane;

an elongated locking member operably connected to said handle bolt and being disposed along a horizontal plane between the plurality of fence posts and extending substantially perpendicular to said handle bolt, said locking member contemporaneously moving with said handle bolt in select directions during operating conditions;

a plurality of brackets connected to one of the fence posts and said frame respectively, said plurality of brackets for guiding and receiving said locking member therethrough so that said frame can be selectively toggled between locked and unlocked positions;

a back up plate welded to said plurality of brackets and for assisting to maintain said locking member at a substantially stable position during operating conditions; and

spring means disposed within said locking member and for maintaining said locking member at a predetermined position so that said frame can remain locked as desired by a user; said spring means comprising

a pin connected to said back up plate and extending outwardly therefrom towards said locking member, said locking member having a substantially horizontal slot formed therein and for receiving said pin therethrough so that said locking member can be directed along a substantially horizontal path when moved between open and closed positions, and

a helical spring member connected to said pin and extending rearwardly therefrom within said locking member, said spring member being stretched when said locking member is moved to an open position and

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reaching an equilibrium state when said locking member is moved to a closed position.

7. (original) The gate latching mechanism of claim 6, further comprising:
a rod coupling welded to said locking member and having a threaded interior surface for receiving said handle bolt therein; and

a stop member threadably connected to said rod coupling and for defining a maximum distance through which said handle bolt can be inserted into said rod coupling.

8. (original) The gate latching mechanism of claim 6, further comprising: an off-center bracket for pivotally connecting said handle to said frame, said off-center bracket comprising

a flange portion secured to said frame, and

a plurality of spaced side walls integral with said flange portion and for receiving said handle therebetween, said plurality of side walls having a plurality of apertures formed therein and being respectively aligned along a select plane and for receiving a fastening member therethrough so that said handle can be selectively pivoted as desired by a user.

9. (original) The gate latching mechanism of claim 7, further comprising: at least one bushing positioned about said rod coupling and for assisting to maintain same at a stable position during operating conditions.

10. (currently amended) A gate latching mechanism comprising:
a frame comprising a plurality of spaced vertical members pivotally secured to a first fence post and removably engageable with a second fence post respectively, said frame extending between the first and second fence posts for preventing entrance from an exterior thereof;

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a handle pivotally ~~connected~~ mounted with respect to one ~~said plurality of the~~ vertical members and being movable along a first plane between neutral and pivoted positions, said handle comprising a bolt traversing therethrough and being disposed substantially orthogonal to the first plane;

an elongated locking member operably connected to said handle bolt and being disposed along a horizontal plane between the plurality of fence posts and extending substantially perpendicular to said handle bolt, said locking member contemporaneously moving with said handle bolt in select directions during operating conditions;

a plurality of brackets connected to one of the fence posts and said frame respectively, said plurality of brackets for guiding and receiving said locking member therethrough so that said frame can be selectively toggled between locked and unlocked positions;

a back up plate welded to said plurality of brackets and for assisting to maintain said locking member at a substantially stable position during operating conditions;

spring means disposed within said locking member and for maintaining said locking member at a predetermined position so that said frame can remain locked as desired by a user; said spring means comprising

a pin connected to said back up plate and extending outwardly therefrom towards said locking member, said locking member having a substantially horizontal slot formed therein and for receiving said pin therethrough so that said locking member can be directed along a substantially horizontal path when moved between open and closed positions, and

a helical spring member connected to said pin and extending rearwardly therefrom within said locking member, said spring member being stretched when said locking member is moved to an open position and reaching an equilibrium state when said locking member is moved to a closed position;

a rod coupling welded to said locking member and having a threaded interior surface for receiving said handle bolt therein; and

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a stop member threadably connected to said rod coupling and for defining a maximum distance through which said handle bolt can be inserted into said rod coupling.

11. (original) The gate latching mechanism of claim 10, further comprising: an off-center bracket for pivotally connecting said handle to said frame, said off-center bracket comprising

a flange portion secured to said frame, and

a plurality of spaced side walls integral with said flange portion and for receiving said handle therebetween, said plurality of side walls having a plurality of apertures formed therein and being respectively aligned along a select plane and for receiving a fastening member therethrough so that said handle can be selectively pivoted as desired by a user.

12. (original) The gate latching mechanism of claim 10, further comprising: at least one bushing positioned about said rod coupling and for assisting to maintain same at a stable position during operating conditions.